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Title: Story of Dragonia

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## Introduction

The history of the Ebon Skull would not be complete without the journals of Dragonia that we are fortunate to still have. While her name is still used by mothers to scare children into being good or under the hushed campfire stories of the orc, it is amazing to see the young girl from which this darkness sprang. For where there were no journals, I have done my best to recreate the events that led her to the Skull.

- Master Scholar Nahman

## Chapter I

As a child, life was agonizingly simple for Dragonia. Mornings would start while the air was still crisp and the night sky was dripping with the universe. By the time the morning sun changed the horizon to a brilliant orange, Dragonia was done with a quarter of the day's chores. Milking the one cow, getting the eggs, sweeping the barn. All the time, their farm just outside of Britain, she watched as assorted strangers trudged past on the mud road, going off to adventures that she couldn't even dream of.

Her parents were simple

and strict. Dragonia was their only child, a curse they blamed on a vindictive neighbor who practiced in the dark arts. Dragonia would have to eavesdrop on her parents to learn of this story. When she heard it, the door that it opened to her simple world was forever changed. Someone had the power to take away a woman's fertility? What sort of person was this neighbor? What else had she done? To add to the curiosity, the plot of land next to theirs was creped and dead. Nothing would grow there. The barn and house were falling apart and all that was told to her by her mother was to stay away for evil things lurked inside.

This was too much for a girl like Dragonia. In the glowing light of dusk, she snuck through two dislodged planks, into the unknown. The smell of mildew and rot was almost overpowering. She was in what appeared to be a kitchen. There was a rusting stove pot, a table, and what appeared to be the remnants of candles. Spider webs covered the ceiling and hung like drapes. A few rodents scurried from her unwelcome presence as she swallowed and pushed forward to the one door.

Rays of sunshine were beginning to illuminate the clouds of dust brought on through the intrusion. The spider webs seemed to grow thicker as she neared the door that only hung on one hinge. Her mind screamed that there

was danger, that she had  
never seen spider webs  
this big or this strong.

As she pushed the door  
open, the hinge gave way  
and the door came  
crashing to the ground in  
a cloud. Behind in the  
room, was a cave made  
of webs. The floor,  
covered in various bones  
was painted with a  
strange star. Through  
some of the webs she  
could see various dark  
paintings, peeling from the  
walls. Dark faces with  
wide white eyes stood  
side by side with strange  
symbols.

In the web were various  
cocoons the size that  
seemed to indicate rats  
or cats. From the open  
door, she guessed maybe  
pigeons as well. As she  
looked closer, her eyes  
caught a movement to  
her right. A look in that  
direction revealed a  
cocoon the size of a  
human, a hand covered  
with a leather glow  
hanging out from the  
webs folds and the top  
of head, sticking out  
from the web, its undead  
eyes staring at her.

A strange feeling came  
over her, a warming  
tingleness that spread  
throughout Dragonia's  
body. She stared at the  
dead woman and wondered  
who she was. And then  
the woman blinked and  
began to struggle.

Dragonia's heart leaped up  
into her throat and she  
swung around to find  
herself face to face with  
a black mass of angles  
and the hard shell of a  
giant black widow spider.

She was close enough to  
see the hundreds of eyes  
and her reflection in each  
one. The two regarded  
each other and Dragonia  
stared into the reflection  
of herself. She was still  
as a mouse, her breathing  
stopped and she saw her  
reflection begin to change.

She saw her skin melt  
away, the skull shining  
through and all around  
was snow, and mountains.

The spider suddenly  
turned around causing  
Dragonia to jump, and it  
scurried away into a hole  
in the web above.

Dragonia ran home,  
covered in dust and dirt,  
and as she was scolded  
by her mother for taking  
so long, her body was in  
turmoil. Feelings she has  
never felt spiked through  
her body. A strange  
warmness spread  
throughout her and  
butterflies dances in her  
stomach.

After going to bed, she  
found she could not sleep  
at first. Her minds eye  
relived the sight of the  
woman. . or it could have  
been a man with long  
hair, she wasn't sure. .  
and the dark creature  
that seemed to let her  
go.

She ran her hands over  
her body, feeling its  
warmth, seeking a release  
she didn't understand . .

.

And as she fell into sleep  
she had her first dream  
of the Ebon Skull. She  
was in walking in the  
wastelands of Caina. The  
snow was swirling but

silent and Dragonia was drawn to a snow embankment on the side of the mountain. As she neared it, she saw the steam rising from the snow.

The only sounds were the crunch of snow under her bare feet. The steam seemed to be coming from a hole in the snow. She reached down inside and quickly pulled out, her hand singed. The snow began to quickly melt, and a glossy black object slowly began to emerge from the snow. It was a skull and its eyes bored into Dragonia's. Its jaw moved.

"Dragonia . . ."

She awoke to a day that promised to be unlike any other. From that night on, her dreams were filled with visions of Caina and the future. Of orcs, of wars, of rings of fire, and harpies swinging swords that spoke in dark whispers. Some were violent, some were sexual, and while she didn't understand them, she felt their calling nature.

## Chapter II

Her trips to the heart and soul of Britain were always days of excitement for Dragonia. Street vendors, the throng of adventures at the bank, the smell of garbage, and the occasional rush of horsemen fighting for unknown reasons, chasing each other up and down the streets and alleys were much better than the dullness of home.

When she had reached the age of puberty, the farm suffered a few years of draught. The workload increased for the whole family and Dragonia was entrusted to go to the city on the weekly errand to pick up food or supplies.

At first she was scared to be alone in such a chaotic environment but after a few trips, she noticed that no one paid much mind to her. Possibly she was too plain for lechers, and too poor looking for thieves. It often seemed to her that she was invisible in this sea of humanity.

It was on a warm spring day that she first noticed herself being noticed. Her walk to the bakery took her past an old run down door in the center of a stone building. A wooden sign with faded paint hung over the door, marking it as a shop rather than a house. On the sign was a picture of garlic and nightshade.

On this warm spring day, with the sewage backing up onto the streets, making the flies even more a nuisance than usual, an old man stood in the doorway, staring at Dragonia. Her eyes only got a quick glance before she averted her gaze to the ground and stepped up her gait but the memory burned in her. The man was staring at her.

The next week, she encountered the same man

again, and the week after that as well. He seemed to wait for her at his doorstep, watching her walk by. She thought about him each time she got home and wondered why he was so peculiar. He looked old, with a long white beard and bushy eyebrows. He wore a brown robe with sandals and a pouch where he probably kept his gold, hanging secure from a belt.

The next week she was surprised to see that the man was not there but the door was open, showing only a dimly lit room beyond. Dragonia stopped, her curiosity tugging at her, trying to persuade her into peaking into the shop.

Good sense won out though and she continued around the corner to the bakery.

Her eyes went from the ground up to a brown mass not quite in time to stop her from running head on into the old man who looked down at her.

"I'm sorry!" Dragonia squeaked as she backed up.

"No, I am sorry. See, I wanted to invite you into my shop."

"Oh, um, I can't today. I'm kind of late as it is."

The old man smiled. "Very well. You are welcome anytime." Then he floated past her and walked back to his shop.

\*continued\*

Chapter II continued:

Dragonia took a step toward the bakery, then another, but before she knew what he feet were doing, she had turned around and was following the old man to his shop. She would not be able to sleep tonight without knowing what was in the shop or why the old man was interested in inviting her.

It was the smell of the shop that first hit her. The smells of mint, garlic, and other herbs assaulted her senses. Strange colored potions lined the shelves that crisscrossed the store. The old man was standing at a table and grinding something together.

He looked up at her.  
"You are Dragonia."

Dragonia stopped in her tracks. "What?"

"You are Dragonia." The old man smiled.

"I. . .you. . .how did you know my name?"

The old man giggled as if partaking in a practical joke. He covered his mouth and whispered, "The Skull told me."

Dragonia's eyes narrowed and in her mind the memories of her dreams flickered to life.

"Yes. . .Dragonia. . .Tell me girl. Do you have a rat problem at home?"

Dragonia slowly approached the table. "I guess so. Who doesn't"



"Watch. . . " The old man took his grindings, now a green ash and let it slide into a bowl. Still smiling, he pulled out an orange from his pouch, cut it open with a small knife, and squeezed the juice into the bowl. Handing a glass spoon to Dragonia he uttered, "Stir this for me."

The old man skirted off while Dragonia stirred the syrupy mixture. When he returned, he brought a small white rabbit with him and he placed it on the table. "Do you like rabbits Dragonia?"

Dragonia nodded. The rabbit hopped over to the bowl, nose twitching and it proceeded to lick up the green syrup. "Good, good."

Dragonia watched as the rabbit suddenly jerked and sneezed. It backed away from the bowl and sneezed again, this time its nose turning red, staining the white fur around its mouth. It sneezed again and wheezed, then lying down it seemed to struggle for air.

The old man watched Dragonia intently as she watch wide-eyed as the rabbit struggled against death. For her, it was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen. It gave her goosebumps and butterflies.

"The rabbit is dead Dragonia."

"Yes. I know."

"It would work good on

rats, eh?"

Dragonina nodded.

The old man suddenly burst into a fit of mad laughter. Dragonina stared at him but was not afraid. "Can you teach me how to make that?"

Thus began his training of Dragonina. Her lessons with Nostur'yl were short. She only dared stay for an hour at most on her trips to town. From there she began to learn of death and the magic that surrounds it, of spells and inscription, or potions and poisons.

It was there that the seed of her restlessness with her home grew.

### Chapter III

With learning came more dreams. Every night and sometime while she was awake, she saw visions of many things. She saw snow and darkness, Drow assassins and orcs, and of a child of light that was yet to be conceived whom she saw causing much pain in her world.

She never mentioned it to her teacher who was too amazed at Dragonina's rapid learning of the arts to be surprised at anything in this young girl's life. As she learned to write, she kept a careful record of her days on hand made parchment.

"I dreamed again last night. It was of the orcs again but this time it was different. These

dreams lately have not been the strange breeding ones as before. Of these dreams I wake up with my eyes moist. My heart goes out to them. For centuries they ruled this land before man came and forced them into the wilderness, killing them on sight as if they were animals. That was sad but in the last hundred years, orcs have adapted to their new role in the world. In my dream though something terrible was happening to them, something that walked through the brush invisible, something that butchered orcs without sound, without sight, only blood and the stench of death. I saw running, screaming orcs. The Skull whispers to me and tells me to help them but I cannot. I have never seen an orc in real life, only in dreams. I know not how to help them."

Dragonina found ways to practice her skills at home. Poisoning predators that preyed on her father's livestock was one of her favorites. She would poison dead rabbits and leave it out on the outskirts of the field for the coyotes to eat. Many times she would hide at dusk and watch as the hungry animals ingested the corpse and then convulse in a violent death grip in the tall grass. The beauty of unraveling life filled her with warmth and a sexual excitement that she still did not understand. One sunset, as she waited in her ditch for the predators to come, she saw an orc at the edge

of the woods. It stared at her. At first she couldn't tell if it was a vision or reality. The orc looked nervously behind him, then at her. Then he smiled, snarled and disappeared.

Dragonica rubbed her eyes and looked in the shadows desperately. Her heart was pounding violently in her chest and her hands were shaking.

"I saw an orc today. I do not know if it was a vision or reality. While confusing, it has shown me that I cannot stay here on the farm.

Something is calling me, I do not know what, but I will not find it here. On that moment on the field, with the orange glow of the setting sun on that orc's snarling face, I wish he had kidnapped me and taken me away from this stupor of home. I must leave soon. I know not where or how, I just know that I have to leave. My father and mother. . . I do not know how they will manage the farm without me and I would be lying if I said that there isn't a small amount of guilt towards the beings that gave me life into this world. There is no love though. I am no more than a worker for them. I must go."

## Chapter IV

This seed of discontent stirred in Dragonica, the dreams becoming more vivid and emotionally draining. Each trip to town reminded her that there was a world outside the work on the farm.

Tamers with large fire  
breathing dragons, archers  
letting loose whispering  
hell on enemies that  
seemed to descend on  
Britain in greater  
numbers, and the weary  
and tired adventures that  
came to stop in for  
reagents at her teacher's  
shop . . . they all  
reminded Dragonia that it  
was time for her to fly  
the nest and spread her  
wings. It was a dark  
blustery day that her  
chores brought her to  
the bank in Britain. There  
were less people than  
usual but still, Dragonia  
heard that familiar crack  
of air and saw the air  
before her split and open  
up into a moongate.

A young magician stepped  
out of it and headed to  
the bank.

Dragonia stared into the  
moonlight, her eyes  
reflecting the sparks that  
flew from the protesting  
air. She dropped her bag  
with seed and took a  
step forward. She  
stopped. She looked behind  
her one last time and  
then at the fastest she  
had ever run before she  
sprinted through the gate.

The world around her  
stretched and moaned.  
She had never been  
through a gate. She saw  
stars and through the  
howling wind she heard  
laughter and singing, then  
she was on the other  
side.

The humid air hit her.  
She was in front of a  
bank in a town that she  
had never seen before. A  
few of the locals looked

at her for a moment but then continued on with their present actions.

Dragonina stood, shaking softly and feeling the most alone and scared than she had ever felt. She was without money, skills, a place to sleep, or even a scrap of food. She walked for hours, wondering if she had made the right choice. "Where are my visions now?" she thought to herself. "Where are they when I need them" She smelled a familiar smell coming from one shop on the edge of a hedge maze that seemed to be centered in the center of town. It was a reagent shop and she headed to it, thinking that maybe she could get a job to pay for some room and board until she figured out where she needed to go.

Inside were a few mingling mages, smell herbs and mumbling about the prices. One though immediately looked up when she wandered into the shop. He squinted his eyes and watched her.

She stared back, having the strange sense of déjà vu that sometimes accompanies her visions. He nodded and walked over to her.

"Hello child."

\*continued\*

Chapter IV continued:

Dragonina nodded. Why did everyone have to refer to her as a child?

"You seek the Ebon

Skull?"

Dragonica thought about this and then nodded slowly, shyly looking at her feet.

"I am Rune Artisem. You must go to Caina. There you shall meet your destiny."

With that he uttered the magic so often heard at the bank and a moongate appeared before them, almost knocking over several jars of bloodmoss. "Hey!" screamed the proprietor. Dragonica smiled her thanks and stepped through the gate.

This moongate thrust her into darkness and a bitter biting cold. The light from the moons blinded her and as she stumbled into snow, all she could see was pitch black. She closed her eyes and embraced her arms around her tightly, trying to keep the howling wind from finding its way into her robe.

As her eyes adjusted to the darkness, she opened them and saw the faint outline of buildings around her. She could only see the outlines and shadows but as she got closer to them she saw their decrepit state.

Her clothing was poorly equipped for the cold and her feet were growing soaked and numb. The pain was almost unbearable which Dragonica recognized as good. She knew though that she needed to find shelter and quick. She briskly walked and stumbled through the

snow filled streets and  
alleys looking for signs of  
life. Once, down a street,  
she could see a silhouette  
move slowly through the  
darkness. A cold feeling  
in her heart knew that  
this creature was the  
walking undead. It would  
provide no help to her  
and it was probably a  
good idea to stay away  
from it.

It wasn't long until she  
found a window high in a  
tower that glowed from  
candlelight. Over the  
howling wind she thought  
she heard organ music. It  
was a sad slow song that  
seemed to be a chorus  
of pain and suffering. As  
she approached the  
building the music stopped  
and she thought she saw  
a shape appear in the  
window momentarily but  
when she looked, she saw  
nothing but flickering  
shadows.

She approached the door.

Here is what is recorded  
in her journal of this  
event:

The large wooden door  
opened and the warm air  
hit me. I could see a fire  
raging in a fireplace in  
the back. In the doorway  
stood a large man  
wearing a red mask. The  
mask had fangs and  
exaggerated features to  
make it look as a  
monster might look to a  
child. Cut into the wood  
were two slits to allow  
the wearer to look out.  
He stared at me for a  
moment before standing  
aside to let me in at  
which point I rushed  
straight to the fire, my



whole form shivering from the cold. He closed the door and in a muffled but deep voice behind the mask he said, "Welcome child."

I nodded and he walked around me.

"They did not say how beautiful you were."

I looked up. "No one has ever called me beautiful."

"You are among your own kind now." He walked up to me and ran his decayed hand down my cheek and down my shoulder, stopping above my breast. I briefly glanced at his hand to spy a ring with a flaming skull on it. He paused with his hand pressing against me, and then he stepped away.

"Yes. Very beautiful. Welcome to Caina. I will have a slave dress you and teach you what you must do." He walked to a grand staircase and turned around. "I am Lord Dealthagar. Welcome to your destiny." Then he disappeared into the shadows of the upper level.

As I tried to warm by the fire I began to take in my surrounding. The torn tapestries on the wall had a strange look to them and as I examined them further I saw that they were made with human skin. The chair on which I sat was made with human bones, polished bright with padding made from weaved human hair. I was so fascinated that

I did not see the female human slave enter the room holding a heavy black wool robe and thick leather boots made from seal fur. "Hello. Please put this one. It will be much warmer." Her smile was certainly warm but I doubted that I could ever find warmth in that part of the world. I undressed out of my soaked farmer rags and as the firelight reflected off my nude body, I sensed the shadows seem to move as if to see me better. I caught the lady slave eyeing me with what seemed impure thoughts. I quickly grew goosebumps and slipped into the heavy fabric.

Once dressed, I was taken to where I learned was the slave's training quarters where I would begin my journey in the Ebon Skull. I was told of my first lessons that were to be completed and that my master would be a living man by the name of Lord Darlantan. I was given a room by myself in the attic and I have to say, it was quite nice with plenty of furs and a lantern that burned pure whale oil, a sweeter scent I cannot imagine.

## Chapter V

From the journal of  
Dragonia:

My quest to gain acceptance into the order seemed simple at first. I was to find a boy by the name of Darren and take some magical sword from him. My confidence in myself was severely lacking. I spent half the

day trying to kill some  
sort of lizard man with  
no luck. How was I to  
take on some adventurer  
with a magic sword?  
Especially a sword as  
hyped up as this. A  
sword with a soul and a  
blade so sharp it could  
split a being in two with  
one swipe.

While I am still  
inexperienced, Treadeau  
Du'rome's spellbook did  
come in handy though. I  
must remember to thank  
him again when I see him.  
I was going through  
reagents like candy and  
each new spell was like a  
new toy during the winter  
festivals. I was amazed  
and enthralled with my  
power.

I spent the later part of  
the day staking out the  
island north of Jhelom. It  
was boring and dangerous.  
When I wasn't working on  
poisoning my sword (which  
led to more painful cuts  
than I dare to think  
about) I was evading giant  
poisonous snakes.

The hot Jhelom sun acted  
as a sleeping spell on me  
and I drifted off several  
times, dreaming of Caina  
and the walls of Golgotha  
covered in boils. It was a  
disturbing dream and not  
very helpful.

Finally, after a run in  
with an alligator, I  
figured that I could spend  
some of the time getting  
more reagents for I was  
dangerously low so I  
headed back into town. I  
was forced to hawk much  
of what I owned and  
while I was in the  
particulars of this act, a  
blur in the tailor shop  
caught my eye.

What was it that I saw?  
I could feel the fabric  
between life and death  
stretching. I focused and  
I saw a spirit. I couldn't  
make much of him as he  
faded in and out, dancing  
around me. I focused  
some more and I realized  
that he was calling my  
name!

"You are indeed the one,  
" he said.

The one what? I asked  
this spirit many questions  
but it did not say much,  
fading in and out as it  
felt like, asking questions  
every now and then. "Who  
is your master?"

"What do you dream?"  
"Why do you wear a  
sword?"

I grew frustrated with  
the spirit as he danced  
in and out of the fabric  
and refused to answer  
my questions. Finally, it  
stopped and told me that  
Darren had returned to  
the island.

I dashed back, dropping  
my spell book, and  
flustering any and all  
plans that I had. Indeed,  
he was on the island and  
he was not the handsome  
villain that I had hoped.  
He was stocky and plain  
and the shine of  
intelligence did not show  
on this boy's eyes.

Yet, still, I did not  
underestimate him.  
Although he did not look  
dangerous, he could be.

So I proceeded with a  
desire to use my female  
charms on him. I dressed  
in the local garb of a

farmhand and approached him.

After small chitchat, he mentioned that he was heading to the Dungeon of Covetous. He seemed not at all interested in me and I could see that my charm as a lady was not working. Now, diary, here is the strange part: I was disappointed. Even though he was squat and ugly (and dumb to boot), I found a desire in me that I have not been aware of before. Maybe it is because this is the first time that I have not been under my parent's cruel grip, or maybe the dreams have been stirring some sort of pot inside of me, I don't know.

I felt undisciplined and ashamed. I put away my guttural thoughts and placed in my mind how I was going to kill the lad. My resources were low. I decided on a combination of An Ex Por and In Nox. I tried casting Ex Por on this fool over half of Sosaria. I just did not have the experience!

\*continued\*

Chapter V continued:

Finally, with the help of my poltergeist friend. I cast In Nox on the boy and kept a good distance away from him as the poison turned his blood to acid and he died on the spot. Grateful I was, because the fool could not stop screaming in pain and shock of what I

did. He must of  
attracted every ettin in  
the woods with his  
wailing! I stopped and  
looked at the corpse. I  
had just killed an  
innocent with my magic. A  
first for me. I closed my  
eyes and savored the  
moment. I found the  
feeling powerful and  
erotic.

My instructions snapped  
me to action and I  
quickly shifted through  
the body. No sword!  
Failure!

But there was a diary...

I am heading back to the  
meeting place of my  
master. The boy was  
seeking the sword but he  
did not have it yet. My  
quest continues.

It is morning of the next  
day now. My hand hurts  
from writing and I need  
to make many miles  
today. I still have not  
mastered the art of  
recall or moongates. My  
dreams last night were  
fortunately of my master  
and mentor. . .so  
handsome and strong (I  
have never seen such a  
specimen of man before!)

Not the usual dream of  
symbols and fears.  
Yesterday, that strange  
spirit told me that I  
would dream of him and I  
did. The dream was dark  
and beautiful. We were in  
a dark room with chains,  
ropes, tables, and  
hundreds of red candles.  
Outside, the wind howled  
and rattled the walls. I  
must have been in Caina.  
As my pleasure and pain  
climaxed I was aware of  
another watching from  
somewhere in the room.

If killing brings on dreams  
like these, I must  
remember to do it more  
often.

All right diary, no more.  
I will write tomorrow.

## Chapter VI

From the journal of  
Dragonica:

Thursday. "Damn," I  
muttered to myself. How  
did I get myself into this  
mess? I had teleported to  
the center of the  
corrupted Shrine of  
Spirituality and now I  
didn't have enough  
reagents to get me back.

"Lord Darlantan!" I cried  
telepathically.

"Hang on slave." Lord  
Darlantan replied.  
I blushed with  
embarrassment. Why do I  
keep on making these  
foolish mistakes? How can  
I ever hope to be a true  
necromancer? I asked  
myself these questions a  
lot today. There is so  
much to learn of not  
only my skill but of the  
ways of the Order.

My journeys today took  
me to Skara Brae and  
Caina. In Skara Brae, I  
took part in my first  
ritual with the Order,  
celebrating the taking of  
Skara Brae by the forces  
of darkness.

What a rewarding  
experience that was.  
Although I was sacrificed  
(and it hurt like hell!),  
the bonds I made with my  
fellow men and women  
made the experience  
worthwhile.

Many onlookers watched  
us with horror and  
confusion. It was not  
your typical day at the  
bank for many residents!

Afterwards, I ended back  
up in Caina. The city was  
more alive than it usually  
was, with citizens I have  
never seen before  
carrying out their own  
personnal tasks. I hung  
out near the Tower of  
Skulls, talking with a  
fellow named Anthrax.

Now, diary, I apologize  
for not remembering all  
the names. I must  
remember to bring a quill  
and parchment next time  
so that I can accurately  
relay what I've seen.  
Three things of note  
happened yesterday, in  
which I was lucky enough  
to witness.

The first event was the  
arrival of a pale male elf  
and a female elf on a  
horse. They demanded to  
see our Lich Lord, Azalin.  
The male claimed that  
Azalin severed his life  
chord and they demanded  
to see my Lord.

How funny, I thought.  
They come in here  
demanding to see him, like  
he was just hanging  
around, playing solitaire in  
the castle. Even I had of  
yet seen the great Lich  
Lord (although that  
changed that night).

Azalin was not there of  
course. But their  
presence did bring out a  
crowd of curious  
onlookers. I believe the  
name of the male was  
Arathorn and the female,



Molly. Arathorn belonged to no guild but Molly belonged to several. She also stated that a long time ago, Caina was her home.

As the crowd grew the taunts increased. Arathorn became arrogant and boastful, claiming that he could free Aleph, who was bound to the chair in Golgotha (I am still learning all the facts, so bear with me).

"Why don't you do it?" came a leering voice from the crowd.

"I cannot right now. I have yet to harness the power."

Then the troublemakers appeared. Cedric McDougan and his clan, riding on their chickens and acting like overgrown children. As far as I could tell, they were committing no crimes, but they were looking for a fight. I could see it in their swagger and their cocky grins. Besides, everyone knows of their contract on Azalin. If they were not looking for a fight, then why were they there?

Nexus must have been thinking the same thing. As I hid behind a snow dune, I watched as Cedric and his fellow assassins were butchered rather quickly. I guess Cedric's presence alone was enough to fulfill the definition of provoked in article one of Caina's laws.

The citizens of Caina were now in a rage, like rabid dogs, restless and

irrated. It is that  
moment that a  
lightbringer came into  
view. I think it was  
Gromph of Compassion  
but I am not sure. The  
wind and ice were blowing  
so hard that I had a  
hard enough time just  
keeping my eyes open.

A crowd quickly gathered  
around the stranger,  
which he thought was  
unfair and he said so.

"I am not breaking any  
laws of the city. Why do  
you harass me," said the  
weak and old drow.

I do take issue with the  
lightbringer's claim that  
Gromph was killed. What I  
saw was that, although  
taunted, Gromph was left  
to go on his way. There  
was no order to kill him.

I could not help but see  
his logic but I was also  
aware of the following  
factors. Caina is far and  
out of the way of normal  
civilization. If you end up  
in Caina, you want to be  
there. You do not pass  
through Caina to get  
from point A to point B.  
I believe the citizens of  
Caina like it like that.

But the forces of  
darkness have grown very  
powerful in Sosaria. This  
is why these strangers  
stroll through our  
neighborhoods. No matter  
how out of the way we  
are, they abhor our  
existence, and like  
mosquitoes, they hope  
that their unwanted visits  
will slowly drive us mad.

And it is working. I  
watched as Nexus ordered  
his troops to attack the

Order of the Grey Fist,  
although they had already  
paid for their crimes. I  
watched as mob mentality  
quickly swept a crowd of  
the most powerful mages  
and warriors in existence,  
to harass an old weak  
man. I watched as spells  
were cast and the zit  
Hostel was torched.

I am sure that I simply  
do not understand their  
ways yet. I did take quiet  
pleasure in watching  
Cedric killed and to see a  
lightbringer taunted.

I went back to an inn in  
Britannia that night.  
Today I hope to spend  
gathering reagents.

And what journal entry  
would be complete without  
my strange dreams that  
still possess me.

In this dream, I was a  
spirit, floating through a  
vile swamp. I came upon a  
decaying shack where  
inside I heard screaming.  
Inside was a drow. He  
had thrown a large vase  
onto the ground and he  
sat on his knees, pulling  
at his hair.

"NNOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!"

I felt his pain. The pain  
of being cast out of a  
guild. The pains of having  
others take credit for  
his work. The pain of a  
lost love and tonight, the  
pain of being defeated in  
battle. I savored his pain.  
He felt that he was  
treated unfairly. I  
remember seeing the  
drow in Caina. He was  
one of the Grey Fist. As  
a spirit, I looked upon  
the sign on his house. His  
name was Aerios.

Then the dream shifted.  
It might have been to  
the past or the future.  
But the drow now stood  
on the snowy ground of  
Caina. He stood around  
corpses, some on fire,  
some already covered in  
the falling snow.

## Chapter VII

From the journal of  
Dragonica:

Sunday. The spirit came  
to see me again. Was it  
the wind in through the  
leaves or was it the  
spirit that spoke? I  
focused my energy on the  
underworld and soon I saw  
my spirit friend. "Go  
Dragonica . . . Go to your  
mentor."

I know now where I must  
go. It seems that for  
every time he calls me, I  
am on the other side of  
the world. I sigh, pack up  
my things and begin the  
treacherous journey to  
the corrupted Shrine of  
Spirituality.

\*continued\*

Chapter VII continued:

My master, my trainer,  
he beckons me to go to  
the Dungeon of Covetous  
to reclaim the sword  
that my murdered friend  
wrote about. He warned  
me though of its dangers.  
Harpies, gazers, and  
headless ones.

I swallowed and bowed.  
"Yes, my lord."

I spent the next day  
gathering the tools I  
would need to make the  
journey through the  
dungeon. I have never

even been in a dungeon  
and now I am expected to  
march in one and grab a  
sword?

I do not have much time  
to write so let me spell  
out my failures in short  
sentences. My first  
attempt was a failure.  
While my experience and  
sometimes foolhardy  
braver is match for one  
harp, it is not for five.

On my second attempt I  
made a mad dash through  
the dungeon, tripping over  
rocks, and coming face to  
face with startled  
Harpies, their wings  
flapping, and their sagging  
breast swaying as they  
quickly overcome their  
surprise to attack me.

I made it to the passage  
beyond the first portion  
of the dungeon and as I  
rested and tended my  
wounds, a spirit I have  
never seen appeared.

"Yes, you are the one."

"Spirit, " I asked, "I have  
never seen you before.  
What is it you wish of  
me?"

"I am the spirit of the  
sword. This sword,  
Dragonica, was destined to  
go to one of greatness.  
My senses also tell me  
that the messenger that  
will deliver this sword to  
him is also destined for  
greatness. I may rest  
now. Take thy sword so I  
may now rest."

The spirit turned ethereal  
and dissipated into the  
mist of the cave, leaving  
me with a large magical  
sword.

I am no expert on  
weapons but I have seen  
this sword in my dreams.  
It is a sword with a  
dark soul and the power  
to raise the dead. I  
grabbed my sword and  
prepared to make the  
dash back out the  
dungeon when I was  
attacked by a group of  
harpies. I fought and  
tried to escape and was  
amazed at the deep slices  
the sword produced.

Where had the harpies  
come from? I thought I  
was safe in the cave. I  
think they were after  
the sword . . .and sure  
enough, after they slew  
me down, they took  
nothing but the sword  
and flew off to some  
unknown master.

And now a week later . .  
. I have spent one too  
many days in the  
mountains overlooking  
Caina, climbing as high as  
I dare, finding a rocky  
crevice and setting up  
camp. From there I can  
sit by myself, enjoying  
the view of the city  
when the clouds clear  
(which is not often) and  
thinking about my failure  
in my quest.

While I might be a poor  
servant for the Skull, I  
can make a good camp.  
Using blocks of ice, my  
tent, and the surrounding  
rock, I can make a  
shelter that is so warm  
that I have to remove  
my heavy wool robe to  
cool down.  
The howling of the wind  
drowns out my thoughts  
sometimes and when the  
clouds come rolling in like  
a tidal wave, it swallows  
my thoughts and the

self-doubt that goes with  
it. I shiver and get goose  
bumps but the momentary  
lapse of guilt is  
refreshing.

I spend some time as well  
studying my spell book. I  
have so many spells that  
I do not know. Not only  
do I not know them, they  
are completely  
incomprehensible to me.  
How do they understand  
some of these works?  
Who was the one who  
developed such complex  
and powerful magic?

This question brings me  
to my next line of  
thought: Why has there  
not been developments in  
magery in the last 100  
years? Have we reached  
a saturation point? Is  
there a limit to  
knowledge?

My dreams seem to tell  
me that there is not. In  
my dreams I see many  
spells being cast that I  
have never seen before. I  
see the ambition of the  
Skull spreading Caina and  
the spirit of the  
anti-virtues throughout  
Sosaria.

I also had a sickening  
dream of Aleph being  
reunited with his pale and  
malnourished wife, Azrielle.  
I saw him hold his child  
for the first time. While  
watching the scene as a  
specter produced such  
disgust in me, my eyes  
were still drawn to the  
child. While at first it  
seemed that the child  
was small and normal,  
suddenly the babe was  
covered in a shining  
golden light that blinded  
me. I covered my face in  
pain and agony and I then

awoke with a great  
headache that only a sip  
of strong ale and some  
magic could dull.

I also dream of many of  
the anti-virtues. They  
take various forms and  
shapes in my dreams but  
I have learned to  
recognize many of them.  
Anti-virtues such as  
Deceit, Despise, Covetous,  
Shame, Pride, and others  
I do not yet recognize.  
All serving the causes of  
Oblivion and Entropy.

Is lust an anti-virtue, I  
wonder to myself? He  
plays a powerful role in  
my dreams, one that is  
quite satisfying. If it is  
not an anti-virtue, it  
should be. And there is  
one dream that recurs  
again and again, haunting  
me . . . punishing me. I  
failed in my quest. I had  
lost the sword. In my  
nightmares, I relived my  
death by the shrieking  
harpies over and over  
again and in the corner  
of the cave, laughing at  
me, Shame.

From up here in the  
mountain, I notice that  
the snow on the ground  
of Caina is not pure  
white. It is darkened and  
impure, probably from the  
hundreds of chimneys,  
steaming out their dark  
soot. It is such a  
beautiful sight. My love  
and loyalty to it and  
Oblivion is of a strength  
that only a loyal slave  
can know.

## Conclusion

This is all that I have  
for now of Dragonia's  
younger human years. I



shall include the rest of her history with a complete works of the history of the Skull. I am also working on a separate work describing her history with the orcs. There is a lesson to be learned by this part of her life though. Monsters do not always come in the form that we sometimes think. Evil in the form of beauty and innocence is often the most horrifying.

- Master Scholar Nahman